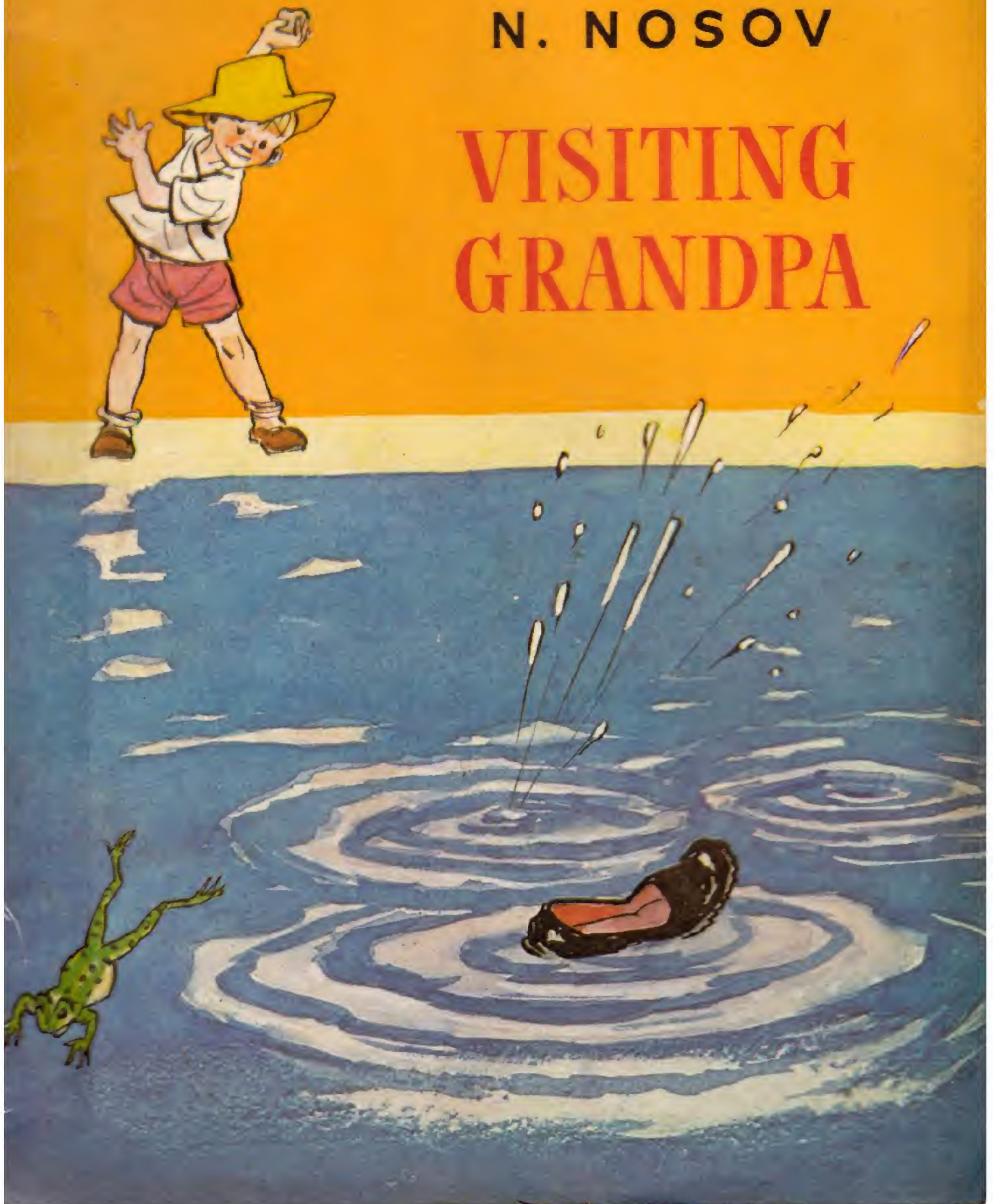


N. NOSOV

VISITING GRANDPA





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*Translated from the Russian by FAINNA SOLASKO
Drawings by I. SEMENOV*



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Shurik and I spent last summer visiting Grandpa. Shurik is my kid brother. I was seven and already at school, but he wasn't. Still, he never obeys me. Well, I don't care. The day we arrived we explored the yard, the sheds and the attic. I found an empty jam jar and an empty box of shoe polish. Shurik found an old door pull and a big galosh. Then we nearly had a fight over a fishing rod in the attic. I saw it first and shouted, "That's mine!"

Then Shurik saw it and he shouted, "It's mine!"

I grabbed one end, he grabbed the other and we pulled. I got so mad I yanked it hard and he tumbled

over backwards. Then he said, "Who needs your old rod? I have my galosh."

"You can kiss your lovely galosh, but don't you dare touch my rod again."

I found a spade in the shed and went off to dig worms, for I had decided to go fishing. Shurik went to ask Grandma for some matches.

"What do you want them for?" she demanded.

"I want to make a fire in the yard. Then I'll put the galosh on top of the fire and when it melts it'll be rubber."

"What will you think of next! Why, you'll burn the house down if I don't keep an eye on you. No, my dear, don't even ask me for them. Children should



never play with matches. Imagine such mischief!"

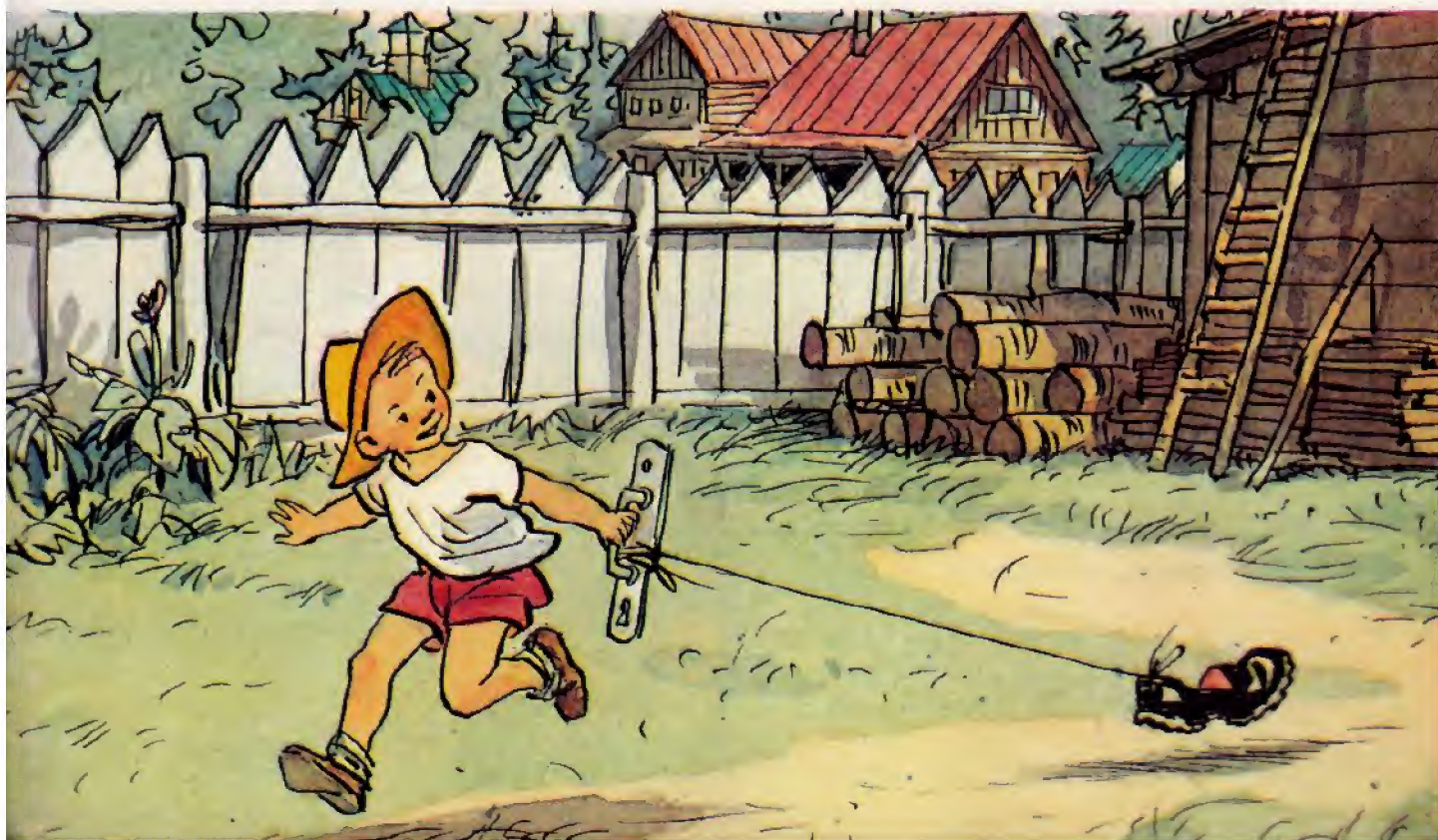
So Shurik tied one end of a piece of string to the door pull and the other to his galosh. He marched up and down the yard, dragging the galosh along. When he came over to me and saw me digging for worms he said, "You're wasting your time. You won't catch anything anyway."

"Why not?"

"I'll put a spell on the fish."

"Don't scare me," I sneered.

I dug some worms, put them in a box and went off to the pond. The pond was behind the house, where the collective farm's gardens began. I put a worm on my hook, cast my line and sat down to wait for a bite.



Shurik crept on me. Suddenly, he began yelling at the top of his voice: *Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread!*

I decided not to say anything, because I knew that if I did, it would only make him shout louder. He finally got tired of shouting his evil spell and tossed his galosh into the water. Then he pulled it up by the string. Then he threw the galosh into the pond and tried hitting it with stones in order to sink it.

For a moment or two I didn't say a word. Then I hollered, "Get out of here! You've scared all my fish away!"

"You won't catch anything anyway. I





put a spell on them.” And he tossed his galosh into the middle of the pond!

I jumped up and grabbed a stick. Shurik ran off, with the galosh dancing along crazily behind him. He was lucky I didn't catch him.

I went back to the pond and sat down to fish again. The sun was high overhead by then and I still hadn't had a single bite. What was wrong with those fish? I was so mad at Shurik I could have beat his brains out. I didn't believe in his spell, but I knew that if I came home empty-handed he'd laugh at me. I tried everything: casting far into the pond and close to the bank, sinking my hook deeper

into the water, but nothing helped. Finally, I decided to go home. Besides, I was very hungry.

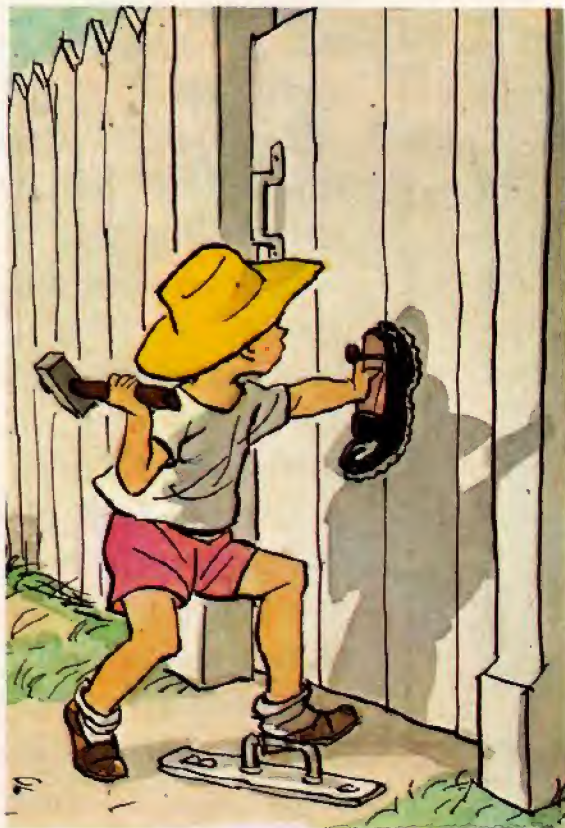
There was a great hammering at our gate.

When I got closer I saw it was Shurik, hammering the door pull to the gate. I don't know where he had got the hammer and nails. "Why are you nailing this here?"

He was happy to see me. "Ah, the fisherman's back! Where's your catch?" he asked and giggled.

"Why are you nailing this to the gate? There is a handle here."

"So what? Now there'll be two. In case one comes off."



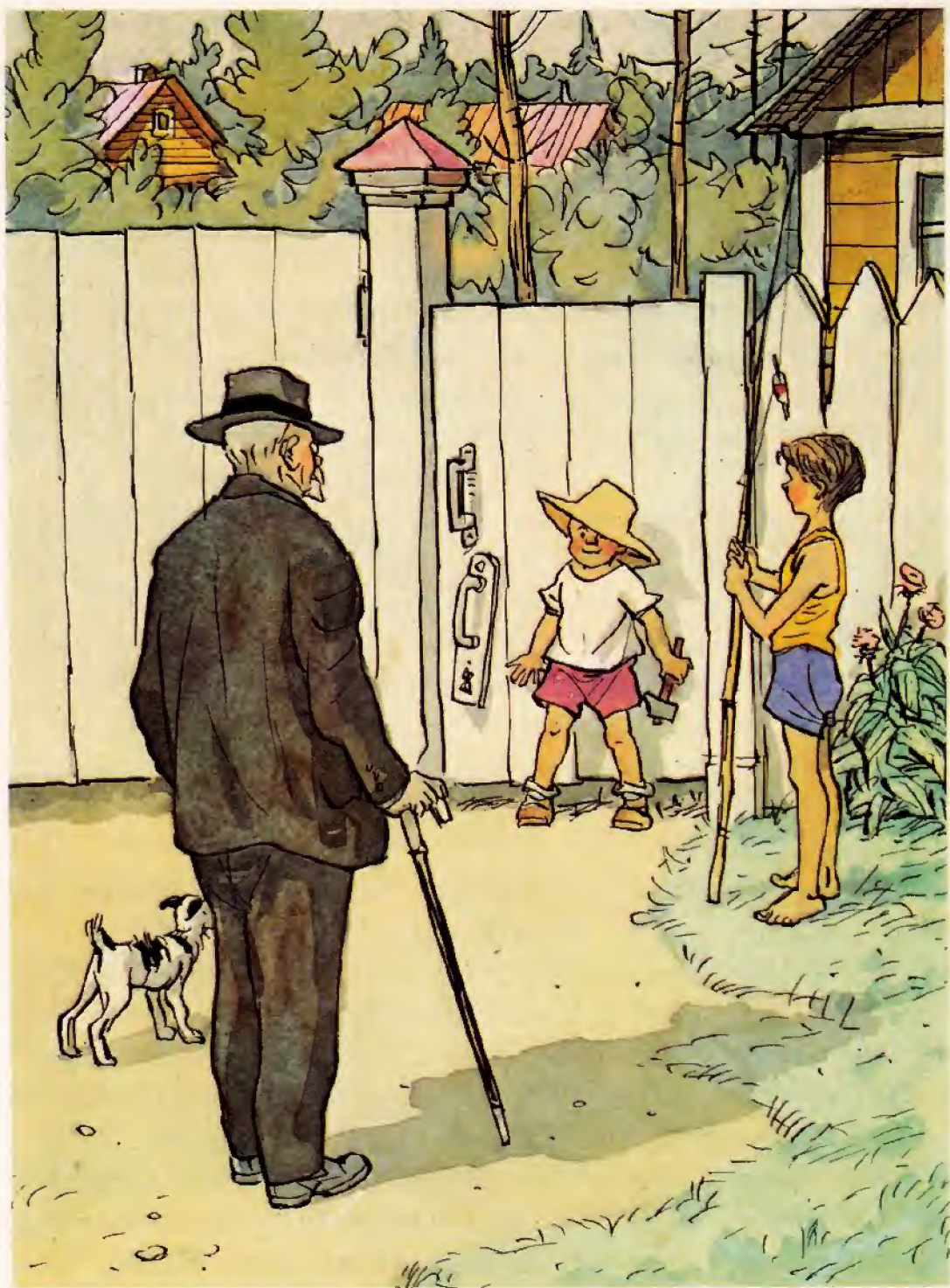
When he was all through hammering he had one nail left. He couldn't decide what to do with it. At first, he wanted to drive it into the fence. Then he got a better idea. He held his galosh to the gate with the sole against the wood and nailed it there.

"What's that for?"

"Nothing special."

"That's stupid."

Then we saw Grandpa coming home for



lunch. Shurik was scared. He tried to pull the galosh off the gate, but it was nailed fast. Then he stood in front of it, to hide it from view. Grandpa came up to us and said, "Good for you, boys! You've got down to work your very first day. Whose idea was it to nail another handle to the gate?"

"Shurik's," I said.

Grandpa cleared his throat. "Well, now we'll have two handles on the gate, one higher up, the other lower down, so that when a very short person comes calling he can pull the bottom one." Then he noticed the galosh. "What's this?"

I snorted, knowing that Shurik was in for it. Shurik turned red. He didn't know what to say.

"What's this, a mailbox?" Grandpa asked. "If the mailman comes round and sees nobody's home he can put our letters in the galosh. That's a very clever idea."

"I thought of it myself."

"Indeed?"

"Honest!"

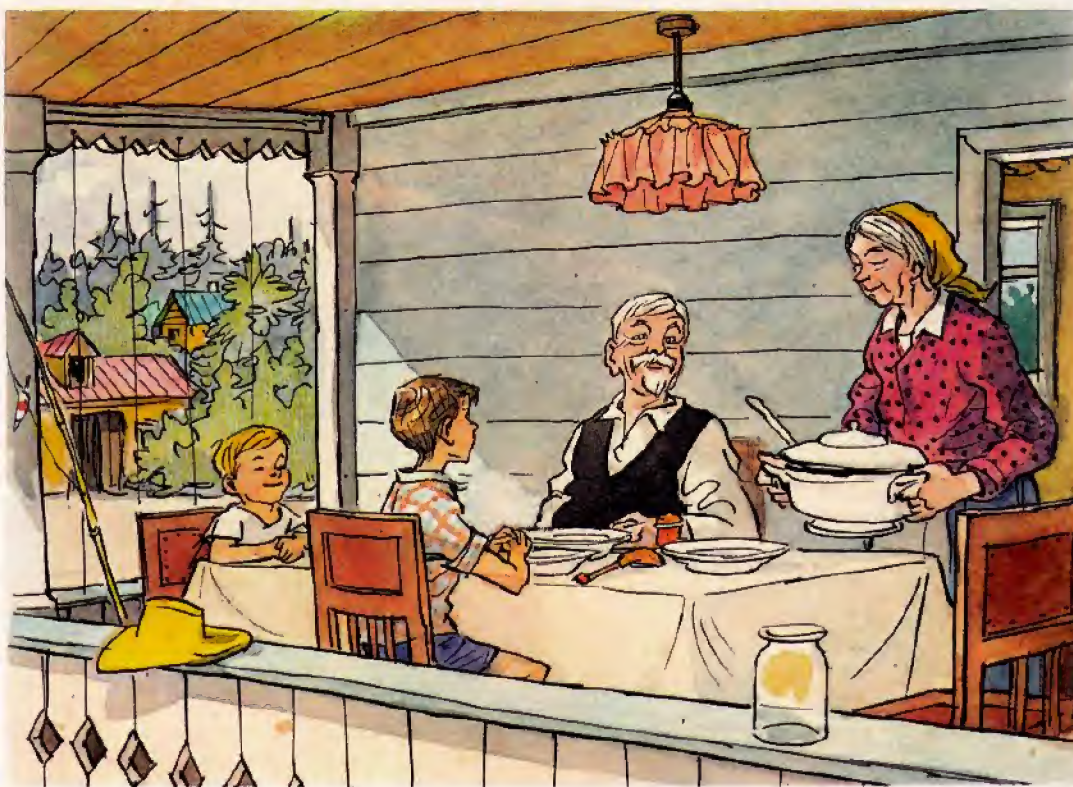
"Good for you."

All during lunch Grandpa kept telling Grandma what a smart fellow Shurik was.

"It's really amazing. We'd never have thought of it. Imagine, he nailed a galosh to the gate! I've been saying we needed a mailbox, but never got around to it."

"I can take a hint. I'll get us a mailbox," Grandma said. "Meanwhile, the galosh can serve as one."

After lunch Shurik ran off to the orchard. Grandpa said to me, "Shurik has really been busy this morning. I'm sure you were up to something, too, Kolya. You



might as well confess and make your Grandpa happy.”

“I went fishing, but I didn’t catch anything.”

“Where’d you go?”

“To the pond.”

“No wonder. They’ve just dug it. I don’t even think there are frogs in it yet. I’ll tell you what. You go down to the river. The current is fast under the wooden bridge. That’s where you fish.” Grandpa went back to work. I got my rod and said to Shurik:

“Let’s go down to the river to fish.”

“You’re trying to make up to me, aren’t you?”

“What for?”



"So I won't put any more spells on the fish."

"I couldn't care less."

I took my box of worms and the empty jam jar for my fish and set off. Shurik tagged along behind. When we got to the river I found a good spot near the bridge and cast my line.

Shurik stayed close to me, mumbling,

*Be he alive, or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make
my bread!*

He'd be still for a few moments and then start up again.

*Be he alive, or be he
dead...*

Suddenly, I had a bite. I yanked at the line. The fish glittered in the air, slipped off the hook and fell wriggling onto the grass at the very edge of the bank.

"Catch it!" Shurik yelled and threw himself





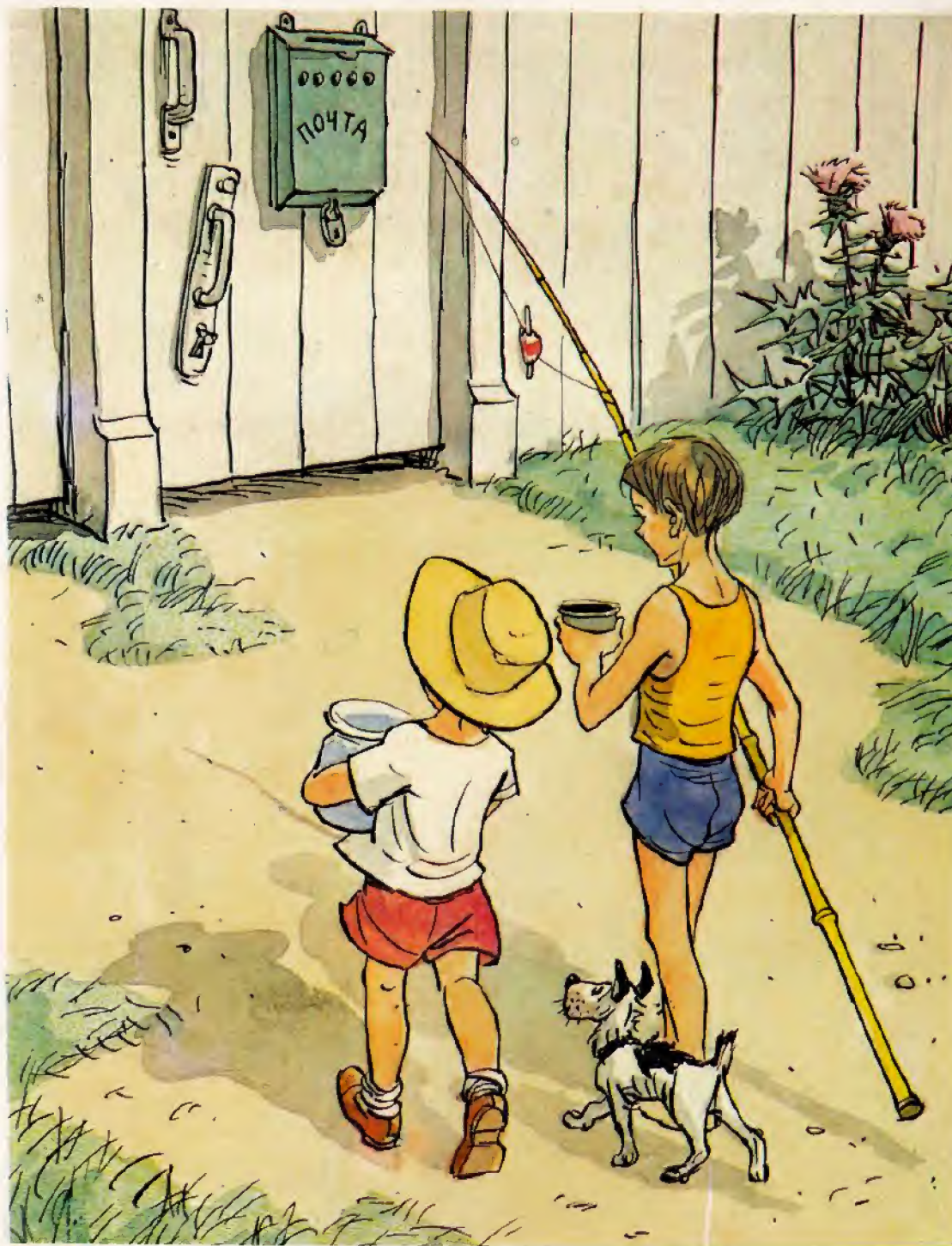
on the fish. It slipped away and was thrashing about at the water's edge. Shurik finally got hold of it. I filled the jar with water and he dropped the fish in.

"It's a perch," he said as he examined it. "I'm sure it is. See the lines on it? Can it be mine?"

"All right. We'll catch a lot more."

We fished for hours that day and caught six little perches, four gudgeons and one small ruff. On the way





home Shurik carried the jar of fish. He wouldn't let me hold it. He was so proud he never minded his galosh missing from the gate. There was a shiny green mailbox in its place.

"Who cares?" he said. "And anyway, the mailbox is nicer." Then he ran off to show Grandma the fish. She was very pleased.

After a while I said to Shurik, "See, your magic spell didn't work. It's not worth much, is it? And I don't believe in it."

"I don't either. You have to be real dumb to believe in magic. Or very old."

This made Grandma laugh, because she was very old, but she didn't believe in magic spells, either.



Н. Носов
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